Of the Perſpicuity of Scripture, and Rules for Interpretation of it.

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. *Martins in the Fields*, Mar. 2. 169⅝.

BEING THE

Third of the LECTURE

For this Preſent YEAR,

Founded by the Honourable

ROBERT BOYLE, Eſquire.

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Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majeſty.

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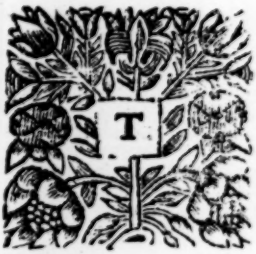
Acts XVII. 11, 12.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and Searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed.



THESE Words are the Character of the *Bereans*, to whom St. *Paul* and *Silas* Preached the Gospel, being drove from *Thessalonica*, a Neighbouring City of *Macedonia*, by the Fury of the Unbelieving *Jews*, that accused them of doing things *contrary to the Decrees of Cæsar*, and by this means set all that City in an *uproar*. But how hardly soever they were used there, they found a better Treatment from the *Bereans*, of whom St. *Luke* saith, that *they were more noble*, εὐγενέστεροι more ingenuous, *than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,*

and Searched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe things were ſo, &c.

In which Words:

1. We are Directed to the Rule, by which all Points of Faith are to be Determined; and that is the Scriptures.

2. There is the Capacity all Perſons are in to judge of that Rule; for the Words are ſpoken indifferently of the *Jews* in *Berea*, the Auditory, to whom St. *Paul* Preached; that they *Searched.*

3. Here are the Qualifications of ſuch as would judge aright, and they are Sincerity and Diligence: They were εὐγενέστεροι more candid, and they *Searched the Scriptures daily.*

4. There is the way and means which are to be uſed in the Interpretation of the Rule; and that is by comparing the Doctrine with Scriptures; there they Searched, *whether thoſe things were ſo.*

5. There is the Succeſs of this courſe, *Therefore many of them believed.*

I have already Treated of the Three Firſt of theſe in the foregoing Sermon, and have ſhewed the Scriptures to be the Rule of Faith; that it is the privilege of all to repair to that Rule for ſatisfaction; and that by Searching, they may arrive thereby to a

John 5. 39.

Know-

Knowledge and underſtanding of that Rule.

And I ſhall now proceed to the way of Interpretation, and the Conſideration of the courſe that is to be taken for the better underſtanding of the Scriptures.

In Diſcourſing upon which,

1. I ſhall premiſe ſome things with reference both to the Perſpicuity and Difficulties of Scripture; for it muſt be acknowledged that the Sacred Books have a mixture of both.

2. I ſhall lay down ſuch Rules, as may be of uſe for the better Interpretation of it.

As to the former I premiſe,

1. When we ſpeak of the Scriptures, we take it for granted that the Tranſlation of it, generally ſpeaking, renders the true ſenſe of the Original; that is, the Original and Tranſlation are to him that underſtands both, as it were but one Book; and ſo again to him that underſtands the Tranſlation only, it is the ſame as if he underſtood the Original.

And that this is ſo, is evident; becauſe all Tranſlations (though not Expoſitions) of what Language, Church, or Age ſoever, do for the moſt part agree: And if a *Catena* or Draught were made of them, as there was of the Ancient Verſions, it would appear ſo to be, beyond all Contradiction.

So

So that if any Stranger utterly unacquainted with the Chriſtian Doctrine, or the Tranſlations, but skill'd in thoſe Languages, ſhould compare them, he would be able to ſay that the Book was the ſame, and only differ'd in the Language; as the Ancient, *viz.* The *Greek*, and *Arabick*, and *Syriack*; or Modern, *viz.* *Engliſh*, *French*, *German*, or *Italian*, &c.

And let Men differ as they will in their particular Opinions, let them be *Jews*, as were the Tranſlators of the *Septuagint*; Apoſtates, as was *Aquila*; *Marcionites*, as *Theodotion*; *Ebionites*, as *Symmachus*. Yet unleſs in thoſe points in which they induſtriouſly corrupt the Text to ſerve a cauſe, and wilfully and apparently depart from the Original, there is a general conſent among them in the main.

V. Juſt. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph. & Tertul. contr. Jud. c. 9.

Which is a clear proof,

2. That the Scriptures were Wrote ſo as to be underſtood; for elſe how could different Tranſlators, unacquainted with the Language or Writings of each other, ſo exactly hit upon the ſame rendition of it?

And indeed it would be too bare-fac'd a Reflection upon Almighty God, by whoſe Direction and Inſpiration the Scripture was Wrote (as I have ſhewed) to ſuppoſe that ſuch a Book thus

thus proceeding from ſo Divine a hand; and upon ſo noble a Deſign as the Revelation of God's Will to Man, ſhould labour under ſuch a defect as the Compoſitions of Men of common Underſtanding are not guilty of.

Certainly it is as poſſible to Write ſo as to be underſtood, as it is to Speak and be underſtood; and ſince Writing is but a kind of Speech, Speech may as well be ſuppoſed unintelligible as Writing; and if it were ſo, both the pleaſure and benefit of Converſation would be prevented and loſt.

And what a preſumption is it to deny that to God which we give to Men; and that when we grant that Men not only can, but do expreſs their Thoughts plainly upon occaſion by Writing, that God either has not that Power, or Will; but where he pretends to declare his Will to Mankind, it ſhould, as God ſaith to *Job* 38. 2. *darken counſel by words without knowledge*; and Write ſo as not to be underſtood, which is to Write to no purpoſe, but only to fill the World with contention, as if what is call'd Revelation were not *to ſend Peace, but* in the Letter of it, *a Sword* of ſtrife among Mankind?

If we own God for the Author, we muſt ſay, that the Scriptures were Wrote that they might be underſtood.

3. We may ſuppoſe further, that at the time when the Scriptures were Written, they were intelligible by thoſe that were Cotemporaries with the Writers, and underſtood the Language they were Written in. Which was a great advantage they had above all After-Ages; for there is no Nation but what has peculiar Cuſtoms, to which Forms of Speech often relate; nor is there any Language which hath not Idiotiſms and Phraſes of their own; and therefore where theſe are not to be underſtood, or are not obſerved, the ſenſe is loſt or prejudiced, and perplexed, as I ſhall preſently ſhew.

4. We may reaſonably conclude, that what had no immediate reference to the perſons then in being, nor to the Ages, and Cuſtoms, and Proprieties then in uſe, but contained common matters, and was Clothed in common Forms of Speech, was intelligible to others that did not live in thoſe Ages, and generally as intelligible as to thoſe that did. Such is the Decalogue, which may be underſtood by us in this Age as well as thoſe that were at Mount *Sinai* at the firſt delivering of it.

5. The

5. The Scriptures being to continue to the World's End, and, generally ſpeaking, being written for the uſe of all Men of all Ages and Nations, they muſt conſequently be Intelligible in the main, and capable of being underſtood by all perſons in all times; or elſe they were written in vain: For to what purpoſe ſhould they be preſerved, or ſhould they oblige Mankind to read them, if they were not to be underſtood?

6. I may ſay, that in Fact the Scriptures are plain in all things that are intended for the uſe of all, and that are neceſſary for all to know, in point of Faith or Practice.

Such are,

(1.) All the Principles of Natural Religion, ſuch as the Being of a God, and his Creation of all things; the Worſhip to be given to him, the Government of the World by Providence; the Immortality of the Soul, and a State of Rewards and Puniſhments in another Life.

Theſe every one may underſtand as he reads them in Scripture, and which no man can read, but he muſt find out and underſtand.

(2.) Such is the Hiſtory of Providence, that is God's proſpering the good and puniſhing wicked Nations; his preſerving a Church

under all the Storms of the moſt violent Perſecutions: His carrying on the train of Prophecies through all interruptions; and accompliſhing them at the time, and after the manner long before prefixed.

Theſe are matters of Fact, and what are obvious to all in the reading of them.

(3.) Such is matter of pure Revelation, and eſpecially that which concerns the Redemption of Mankind by Jeſus Chriſt. As to his Perſon, that he was before the Worlds, which were made by him: That *in the fulneſs of time*, according to the Ancient Predictions, he became Man, and was made Fleſh: That he wrought Miracles in Confirmation of his Miſſion from God, and of the Doctrine he Taught and Profeſſed to receive from the Father: That he was Crucified and Died as a Sacrifice for the Sins of all Mankind: That he roſe again the Third Day from the Dead, and aſcended into Heaven: That he ſent down the Holy Spirit, and continues at the Right Hand of God to be our Mediator; and that we are with reſpect to that Mediation, to offer up all our Prayers in his Name to the Father: And that he is to come at the End of the World to Judgment, and ſhall raiſe the Dead,

Dead, and Summon them all before his Tribunal.

(4.) Of the like kind are all the Proofs and Confirmations of the Doctrine of our Saviour before ſpoken of under another Character; ſuch are Prophecies and Miracles. Prophecies, which though ſometimes obſcure in point of Phraſe, yet there are thoſe that are without difficulty; as that of *Joſiah* and *Cyrus* by Name, that of the place of our Saviour's Birth, the Stock and Lineage, the Tribe and Family he ſhould proceed from; the time he ſhould ſuffer in, *&c.*

And the other Atteſtation by Miracles is too evident to be inſiſted upon.

(5.) Of this ſort are the terms of Salvation; among thoſe things which are plainly ſet down in Scripture; we may find whatever relates to Faith and Manners of Life: And in theſe two are comprehended all that is neceſſary to Salvation. So that whatever is not plainly ſet down in Scripture, or evidently inferr'd from it, is not neceſſary to Salvation. *Aug. de Doct. Chriſt. l. 2.*

Now I am apt to think, that no perſon that comes unprejudiced, I mean not prepoſſeſs'd with contrary Principles, or corrupt Affections, but muſt needs own the Scripture to be clear in the points

points before rehearſed, if ſo be he reads it with an ordinary Diligence and Care.

But will it be ſaid, Are there not obſcurities allowed to be in Scripture, and difficulties which are not to be ſurmounted? And what is a clearer proof of this, than the different Expoſitions we meet with, and the different Opinions Men eſpouſe, and therefore eſpouſe them becauſe they conceive them to be the dictates of Holy Writ?

1. I Anſwer, That is no Objection againſt it; for then there can be nothing certain, if the calling it in queſtion will render it uncertain.

2. This indeed has been an Argument ſet up to overthrow the Authority of Scripture, and ſome have been ſo impertinent as to make uſe of the various Conſtructions and Significations of Words, to ſerve this impious cauſe.

Philos. Scripturæ Interp. C. 3. n. 16. & n. 25. & c. 4.

And ſo among other things, one quotes that Saying of *Quintilian*, *There are innumerable kinds of words of ambiguous and various ſignification; ſo that it ſeemed to ſome of the Philoſophers, that there was no word that doth not ſignify many things.*

But if this be a reaſon why the Scripture is obſcure, and the ſenſe not attainable, then it is common with that to all Books whatſoever, not

not excepting even that Book which the Author thought ſo well of, as to publiſh for the Information of the World.

If this were of any force, then it would be to no more purpoſe to ſpeak than to write; becauſe the words we uſe are capable of different ſenſes, as well as what we write.

This is a way of arguing that proves too much, and goes too far, and ſerves no more than an argument that falls ſhort, and comes not up to the Caſe in hand.

This would make the Divine Oracles like thoſe of the Devil, to be no other than *Ænigma's* and Riddles, as if, in the New coined Phraſe of the Members of the *Romiſh* Church, they were but the *Various figures of Ink upon a Book*: Or ſerved to no other uſe than white Paper, to Write what you will upon, and make what ſenſe out of it that a fruitful Brain can invent.

3. Though there are obſcurities in Scripture, it falls upon ſuch points as are not in themſelves neceſſary, and not neceſſary to all; and notwithſtanding which, a perſon may be ſaved though he dye ignorant of them, or of the ſence of thoſe Scriptures which contain them. For there is no greater ſign of their

not

not being neceſſary, than that they are not what we can underſtand, or are not plainly to be found in Scripture.

4. Though there are obſcurities in Scripture, yet they are nothing in compariſon to the plain Texts of it; and which no more hinder us from underſtanding the plain, than the Spots in the Sun prevent us of the Light of it.

Serm. *Fourth and Sixth of the laſt Year.*

The Obſcurities are like the various Readings, of little conſequence, and importance, (as I have ſhewed) and nothing comparable to what remains intire and perſpicuous. They are only *ſome things that are hard to be underſtood.*

2 Pet. 3. 16.

But how many are the plain and intelligible, and eſpecially of things neceſſary to Salvation?

5. When, I ſay, there are Obſcurities in Scripture, and that they fall upon leſs neceſſary points, I grant that even thoſe obſcure parts are not without their uſe; it being here, as in the Heavens, where the Cloudy Stars that ſcatter a faintiſh light through the Galaxy or Milky-way, though not diſcernible but by a Teleſcope; yet (if we may judge of what we do not know of Nature, by what we do) have their uſe, and by their Influences, without doubt, ſerve a Noble deſign. So though the Obſcure Texts,

Texts of Scripture afford a dim light in compariſon, and what we can at preſent give but a ſlender account of; yet we our ſelves have ſometimes perceived, when we have come by ſearching to underſtand any of them, that we underſtood not before, that they prove of very great advantage; as they ſerve to confirm the plain, and do give light to thoſe that were otherwiſe, and were it not for the light given by theſe, would have remained obſcure.

And indeed, Almighty God has ſo wiſely ordered it, that as there are ſome Works in Nature we do underſtand, and ſome we do not; ſome ſerve a leſſer, and ſome a greater end: So has he alſo *temper'd* the body of Scripture together, the difficult with the eaſy, the obſcure with the plain, the leſs neceſſary with the greater, that our induſtry may be excited by our endeavour to underſtand them; and our labour be rewarded by the underſtanding of them: That we may *Search* as the *Bereans* here did, and upon our Searching, may, as they, come to *believe* and underſtand, or be confirmed in our belief of them.

Toward the better underſtanding of which, 2. I ſhall direct to ſome Rules that may be of ſingular uſe to us in our Search and Enquiry.

1. Where in the firſt place it is adviſable, that we be very converſant in the Sacred Text; and as the *Bereans*, *ſearch it daily*; by which means much of the obſcurity will wear off; and the Phraſe, and Style, and way of arguing will be more evident, and the matter of it make not only the ſtronger impreſſion on our minds, but be clear'd up alſo inſenſibly to us. We ſee how much difficulties are leſſened by practice, as it is in learning the Alphabet, and the firſt Principles of any Language or Science; and when we in the beginning ſtruggled with our ſelves, and uſed a kind of force to bend our minds to it, by degrees the difficulties abated, and we became complete Maſters of the matter that lay before us. So it is in reading the Scriptures, where by uſe we are wonderfully let into the meaning of them. For this reaſon it was that the Prophets were read in the Synagogue every Sabbath-day, as is implied, *Act.* 13. 27. And why alſo the Scriptures were read as well when not underſtood as when they were; according to the practice of the Eunuch. For to what purpoſe would it have been for him when alone, without an Interpreter, to have read *Iſaias* the Prophet upon ſuch an obſcure Argument, if by reading it he might not have been

Act. 8. 30, 31.

been ſome help to himſelf, and by degrees have attained to a further underſtanding of it more or leſs?

And I dare appeal to any that have taken this courſe, and have daily read, and read them with the like impartiality as other Books, and much more where they have read them with the reverence and attention due to Divine Oracles, whether they have not found the difficulties leſſen upon their hands. And if ſuch as daily read thoſe Books with theſe and the like Qualifications, would but account with themſelves for all the difficulties aſſoyl'd and ſolved this way, without any other aſſiſtance, it would be no unpleaſant or unprofitable reflection.

2. Although it be of this advantage to read the Scriptures in courſe, as was uſual in publick in the Synagogues, and in private among perſons piouſly diſpoſed: Yet it would add much to the rendring the abſtruſer parts more eaſy and intelligible, if they began with the plaineſt, either for Duty or Matter, and then proceeded to the more obſcure. For this is a reducing things into a ſtrict and natural method; and is like the beginning with the beginning of a Book wrote in that way, and ſo gradually pro-

ceeding as we are led along from point to point, from Propoſition to Propoſition, till we come to the end of that, and the difficulties together.

The Scripture I own is far from being Wrote after this humane and artificial method, but in a way Extraordinary and Divine: and is among other reaſons, compoſed after the manner in which it is, that we may be obliged to uſe a befitting induſtry in ſearching into the meaning of it; and 'tis certainly one part of that induſtry ſo to order it, that as there is this difference plainly to be obſerved in Scripture, ſo we would thus make an advantage of it by beginning with *Words* and things *eaſy to be underſtood*, before we attempt to underſtand what is in a ſphere for the preſent above our capacity; for *ſuch have need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat, which belongeth to them that are of full age, even thoſe who by reaſon of uſe have their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil*; and I will add, between things plain and abſtruſe, more neceſſary and leſs, certain and doubtful.

Hebr. 5. 12. 14.

3. Another Rule for the underſtanding of Scripture, is to be well acquainted with the principal deſign, and the chief Subject of it, whether as to Faith or Practice: For from thence doth ariſe what is uſually called the *Analogy of Faith*;

Faith; and which will be a Standard upon all occaſions to have recourſe to. For what Senſe is to things ſenſible, and Reaſon to things meerly reaſonable, that is the Analogy of Faith to all Interpretations, and according to whoſe Arbitration they muſt ſtand and fall: Of this the Apoſtle gives an Inſtance as to Faith, 1 *John* 4. 2, 3. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every Spirit that confeſſeth that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh, is of God. And every Spirit that confeſſeth not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh, is not of God.*

And if there ſhould be any place of Scripture that ſuch Hereticks would produce in their favour, we may peremptorily conclude, that the meaning they would force upon it, is no more the meaning of that Scripture, than that can be the Spirit of God, *which confeſſeth not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh.*

4. For the better underſtanding of Scripture, it is a proper way to compare Scripture with Scripture, the Old Teſtament with the New, the obſcure with the plain. For that which is obſcure and difficult in one place, is uſually explained and made clear in another, as St. *Auſtin*, in the Book before quoted, obſerves.

Toward

Toward the more uſeful Application of this Rule, it may be convenient to enquire from whence the Difficulties and Obſcurities in Scripture do ariſe; Whether from the Sublimity of the Matter; the Proprieties of Language; the Relation that one thing has to another, as Types; the Modes and Forms of Speech in Matters Prophetical or Figurative; which we may be helped in by this way of compariſon.

P. 12. When I have juſt before ſaid, that *there is no greater ſign of the matter's being unneceſſay, than when it is what we cannot underſtand, or is not plainly to be found in Scripture*: I mean thereby, not the matter or thing ſpoken of, but the Propoſition: For the Propoſition may be a plain and a very intelligible Propoſition, when the matter of it is inexplicable, and above our underſtanding. As the Propoſition, *God is a Spirit*, is a plain Propoſition, and as eaſy to be underſtood in reſpect of its Sence and Meaning, as that a Triangle is a Figure conſiſting of Three Angles; but the matter is vaſtly different; for who can tell what a Spirit is, or can give as adequate a Definition of it, as he can of a Triangle? And yet the Propoſition before-recited of God's being a Spirit,

is

is as plain to be underſtood, and as neceſſary to be believed; as if it were in its Nature plain, and Intelligible, and that we as perfectly knew what a Spirit is, as we know what a Triangle is: And therefore the Obſcurities ariſing from ſuch Sublimity of the matter, are not to be brought here to account; for they can never be made plainer to us than they are, till our Underſtandings are Elevated and raiſed up to them. 'Tis a Spirit alone that can tell what a Spirit is, and 'tis God only knows himſelf. And though now we have it as plainly Revealed that *God is a Spirit*, as that God is; yet we muſt be contented neither to have an adequate Notion of God, unleſs we were as God, nor alſo the like Notion of a Spirit, till we become Spirits our ſelves.

When I ſay again, That it is a ſign of the *matter's being unneceſſary, that it is not plainly to be found in Scripture*; thereby is meant what is plain to ſuch as Search, Enquire and Compare, and know how to argue from it: And if by Search and Enquiry, by comparing and arguing, it comes to be plain, I may as well ſo call it, as if it was in ſo many words therein expreſſed.

There

There is a very convincing Argument of a Future State in the Scripture quoted by our Saviour, when God ſaith, *I am the God of Abra-*
Mat. 22. 32. *ham*, &c. from whence our Saviour with great ſtrength infers, *God is not the God of the Dead but of the Living*; and ſo thoſe that he is the God of, are alive. But though the force of the Argument is now very evident, by the light our Saviour gives to it, yet I believe few would have obſerved it without that Direction, or to be ſure without taking that Method of comparing Scripture with Scripture.

For it is by that Rule,

(1.) We come to underſtand the Idiotiſms and Proprieties of the Language in which the Scripture was Written; and without attending to which, we ſhall fall very much ſhort of attaining to the ſence of it. Theſe Idiotiſms are common, with the Hebrew, to all Languages, and ſo are no otherwiſe to be underſtood, than by a ſtrict Obſervation of them.

As for Example, Without this Key, how irreconcileable would it be to other Texts, to
Hoſ. 6.6. Mat. 9. 13. have it ſaid, *God would have mercy and not ſacrifice*; and that our Saviour ſhould require his
Joh. 6. 27. Diſciples, *not to labour for that meat which periſheth*; and that the Apoſtle ſhould forbid Women

men the *adorning themſelves with the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel?* All of which were notwithſtanding allow'd, and ſome requir'd elſewhere. 1 Pet. 3. 13. But now if we attend to the Genius of the Hebrew, and compare one Scripture with the other, we ſhall find, that the *Jews* having no Degrees of compariſon, were wont to expreſs compariſons by *Antitheſes* or *Negatives*; and then the ſence of the Negative *Not*, is *not ſo much*; as *labour not*, that is, not ſo much *for the meat that periſheth*, as *for that which endureth to everlaſting life*, &c. And if this be obſerved, we ſhall find there is no contradiction, when in one place Sacrifices are requir'd, and in another, that *God would have mercy and not ſacrifice*; when in one place, it is commanded to *work with their own hands*; and in another, *labour not for the meat that periſheth*, &c. 1 Theſ. 4. 11.

(2.) By this way of compariſon we come to underſtand the Figurative Phraſeology or manner of Expreſſion in Scripture, and we ſhall find that ſuch are not to be underſtood in a proper and literal, but alluſive ſence.

As for Inſtance; God is in Scripture ſaid to have Eyes and Hands, Ears and Bowels,

which are terms belonging to a Natural and Human Body: And alſo to Laugh, and to be Angry, and to Repent, which are paſſions belonging to Mankind. And yet we read alſo, that *God is a Spirit*, and ſo hath not a Body, nor any of the parts belonging to it: And that he *is not as man that he ſhould repent*; and neither is nor can be ſubject to thoſe Infirmities and Paſſions which belong to us. And therefore when ſuch Bodily or Mental Affections and Properties are imputed in words to him, it is in a figurative and improper ſence, and which are ſpoken of him after the manner of Men, and in condeſcenſion to our Infirmity, who are not able to conceive of him as, and according to what he is in himſelf. So that it would be a groſs piece of folly, for the ſake of ſuch Figurative Expreſſions (as *Theodoret* ſaith of *Audæus*) to conceive of God as a Corporeal Being; which is to ſay, he is not a Spirit, and ſo to make the Scripture inconſiſtent with it ſelf.

Hæret. Fabul. l. 4.

Another inſtance of this kind, is the Aſſertion of our Saviour, *This is my Body*; which being a Sacramental as well as Figurative Phraſe of Speech, recourſe muſt be had to the like Inſtitutions in Scripture, and to what has the neareſt

neareſt reſemblance to it; and that is the Paſſover, the *Jewiſh* Sacrament, and, as I may ſo ſay, their Lord's Supper. Now when we read in the Law, of the *Lord's Paſſover*, and that they *roaſted* and *eat the Paſſover*, we eaſily conceive that by it they meant not the Angel's paſſing over the Houſes of the Children of *Iſrael* (which gave occaſion to the Phraſe); but the Lamb, which was the Memorial and the Repreſentation of it. So when in Correſpondence hereto, we read of our Saviour, that at the Inſtitution of the Lord's-Supper, he ſaid of the Bread, *This is my Body*; and that he broke the Bread, and they eat of it; we can reaſonably no more underſtand that his Natural Body was then actually broken, and that they did eat his very Body, than we can underſtand, that when the *Jews* roaſted and eat the Paſſover, they roaſted and eat the Angel that paſſed over the Houſes where the Blood was ſprinkled. And therefore what was improperly and figuratively ſpoken of the one, was after the ſame manner ſpoken of the other, and alike to be underſtood.

Indeed ſuch Figures and Modes of Speech, are as ſoon underſtood, for the moſt part, as plain and literal Propoſitions.

As when our Saviour is called a *Lamb*, a *Door*, a *Shepherd*, a *Vine*, he was no more really ſuch, nor are ſuch Phraſes any more literally to be underſtood, than that *Herod* was a *Fox*, and the Phariſees *Vipers*, becauſe they were ſo called by our Saviour: And therefore as our Saviour's Auditors as ſoon underſtood him, when he ſpoke after this Figurative, as if in the plaineſt and literal Phraſe of it; ſo one would think they ſhould, and we may be as certain they did underſtand our Saviour, when he ſaid, *This is my Body*, not of a proper human Body, but only by way of Repreſentation, according to the nature of the thing, and thoſe places to which this had an immediate reference.

(3.) By this way of compariſon we come to underſtand the Typical Phraſe of Scripture; which of it ſelf is, like the Types, obſcure.

There is a great Conformity between the Old Teſtament and the New, and eſpecially as to what is the main Subject of the Moſaical Law, the Types, Ceremonies, and Rites of it: And where there is this Correſpondence and Conformity, we muſt for the underſtanding of the one, borrow light from the other. And therefore when the like Forms of Speech

τύποι. 1 Cor. 10, 11.

are

are us'd in the New Teſtament, as are in the Old, it is to be ſuppoſed that we are well acquainted with the Old; or that we muſt have recourſe to that for the underſtanding of the New: Of this the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* is an Inſtance, the Phraſeology of which is moſtly Legal and Ritual; and ſo we muſt be acquainted with thoſe Rites, or the Modes of ſpeaking, to underſtand it. I ſhall here content my ſelf with a particular or two of this ſort. It is a known caſe, and very uſual in the Old Teſtament, in the Levitical or Prophetical part of it, to call *a Sin-offering* by the name *Sin*, or in the Tranſlation of the Septuagint, *for Sin.*

יחטאת Lev. 4. 3, 8. Iſai. 53. 10. περὶ ἁμαρτίας.

Now this is an Elliptical way of Expreſſion, very cuſtomary in thoſe and other Languages; but what is cuſtomary and ſignificant in one, yet if Tranſlated into another, oft-times looks abſurdly; and ſo it is neceſſary in ſuch a Tranſlation to ſupply it by what was before underſtood, but not expreſſed; as it is in the Caſes aboveſaid. Thus for inſtance, *Hebr.* 9. 28. 'Tis ſaid our Saviour *Chriſt was once offer'd to bear the Sins of many; and unto them that look for him, ſhall he appear the ſecond time without Sin unto Salvation.* But thus he appear'd the firſt time, he was then without Sin; and therefore here accord-

according to the Subject the Apoſtle is diſcourſing upon, it is to be ſupplied after this manner, *without a Sin-offering.* So it is, *Hebr.* 10. 8. and 2 *Cor.* 5. 21. So we have it according to the latter Phraſe of the Septuagint, *Rom.* 8. 3. *God ſending his own Son in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, and for Sin condemned Sin in the fleſh. For Sin,* is a Phraſe rough and abrupt; but if we add to it *by a Sacrifice for Sin,* it is very agreeable and intelligible.

περὶ ἁμαρτίας.

Now when there is this Myſtical Relation, and the Goſpel has a reſpect in its Phraſe and manner of ſpeaking, to the Types and Ceremonies of the Law, the Antitype is to be explained by the Type, the New by the Old.

(4.) By this way of compariſon, we become acquainted with the Prophetical way of Writing, and may underſtand what without it would be obſcure.

I have juſt before obſerved the Relation that is between the Law and the Goſpel; and that if we would underſtand the Goſpel, it is fit to repair to the Law, as to the Phraſe of it; and if we would underſtand the Law in its nobleſt ſence, we muſt repair to the Goſpel. And from this Relation between theſe Two is it, that the Prophecies of Scripture, eſpecially as to the Future

ture State of the Church under the Goſpel, are clothed in the Phraſe of the Moſaical Inſtitutions and Rites. Thus the Succeſs of the Goſpel, and the Enlargement of the Chriſtian Church, is deſcribed under ſuch Characters. Iſai. 2. 2. 3. *It ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, that the Mountain of the Lord's Houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed in the top of the Mountains, and all Nations ſhall flow unto it.* Iſai. 66. 23. *It ſhall come to paſs from one New-moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all fleſh ſhall come to Worſhip before me* at *Jeruſalem*, v. 20. which, and the like Phraſes were no more literally to be fulfilled, than that we ſhall *eat Bread in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

But now as the Happineſs of the Future State is often deſcribed by ſuch Phraſes as belong to this preſent ſtate, and not to that which they are literally applied to: So the Prophecies concerning the ſtate of the Church under the Goſpel, are frequently exemplified under ſuch Reſemblances and Forms of Speech as ſuited the People of the *Jews*, for whoſe immediate uſe they were wrote; and notwithſtanding which, neither they nor others could poſſibly be led into ſuch a miſtake, as to think that ſuch ſhould the Kingdom of the Meſſias be, as thoſe Expreſſions verbally ſignified; when it was evi-

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dent from the Prophecies of Scripture, that that Legal State was to be aboliſhed, and alſo that ſeveral of the things in the nature of them were unpracticable. As for example; when it was ſaid, that *from one New-moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another*, that is, Monthly and Weekly, all Nations ſhould come up to Worſhip the Lord at *Jeruſalem.*

And therefore in the Explication of ſuch Phraſes, we muſt not conſider what they exactly ſignify in their firſt and original uſe, but to what purpoſe they ſerve and are applied; and if ſo we do, we ſhall lightly as ſoon underſtand the *New heaven and the New earth*, which St. *Peter* ſpeaks of, 2 *Pet.* 3. 13. as *the Heaven and the Earth* in the Firſt Chapter of *Geneſis*: And as well ſhall we underſtand *Babylon* and *Euphrates* in the Myſtical ſence of the *Apocalypſe*, as we do in the Hiſtorical Books of Scripture.

But above all, there is nothing doth ſo lay open the Secrets and Myſteries of Prophecy, as the Event; for by that means, where it is fulfilled, it is as clear as if it had been Hiſtorically related. And as if we look back from the Event to the Prediction, we the better underſtand that Prediction, which without the Knowledge and Obſervation of the Event we could not per-

perhaps have underſtood: So by comparing what yet remains to be fulfilled, with what has been already fulfilled, we have a uſeful key for the underſtanding of the one by the other; the obſcure by the plain, and what we do not know the meaning of, by what we do.

Thus, for inſtance, we may underſtand the Prophetical Schemes of Speech, concerning the deſtruction of a Nation, by comparing one of the Teſtaments with the other; or what is to be fulfilled with what has been fulfilled. So when in the Old Teſtament we find it Prophetically threatned of *Babylon*, *Idumea*, *Egypt*, *&c.* that the *Stars of Heaven, and the Conſtellations thereof ſhall not give their light*---that *all the Hoſt of Heaven ſhall be diſſolved, and fall down as the Leaf of a Vine*--- And when that we read in *Daniel*, the little Horn *caſt down ſome of the Hoſt and of the Stars to the ground, and ſtamped upon them*: We have a key to unlock the Myſterious Expreſſions of the ſame kind in the New Teſtament. As when 'tis ſaid (if it be to be underſtood of the deſtruction of *Judea*) that *the Sun ſhall be darkned, and the Moon ſhall not give her light, and the Stars ſhall fall from Heaven*; and that *a third part of the Sun, Moon, and Stars ſhall be darkned*, &c. it

Iſai. 13. 10. 34. 4. Ezek. 32. 7. Dan. 8. 10. Matt. 29. 12. Revel. 8. 12.

it is to be underſtood after the ſame manner as the other. Now by a reflection upon the ſtate of thoſe Nations aboveſaid, as well as the nature of the thing, we find all intended in thoſe Myſtical Expreſſions was, That theſe Nations ſhould be utterly deſtroyed, and all Orders and Degrees of men, repreſented by the Sun, Moon and Stars, ſhould be diſſolved: And therefore accordingly are we in the Prophetical paſſages in the New Teſtament, to underſtand thoſe Phraſes and Forms of Speech the like way.

Gen. 37. 9.

It would be endleſs to proſecute this Argument as far as it will bear; for then I might go through the 134 Rules of *Franciſcus Ruizius*; but what I have here laid down is ſufficient to help and direct us, generally ſpeaking, in the Interpretation of ſuch Forms of Speech, which often render the ſenſe of Scripture difficult. But God be thanked, there is little of this in compariſon of what is plain and eaſy, and in which the main of a Chriſtian's Duty is concerned. This the experience of every one that is at all converſant in thoſe ſacred Books, will confirm, to the ſilencing of all Cavils, which ſome men of Wit, and others

Regulæ Intelligendi Scripturas Sacras. Par. 1550.

others of Deſign, may pretend to the contrary.

For I dare confidently ſay, That no one can plead ignorance againſt his Duty, or that he failed in it, becauſe the ſacred Pages are not to be underſtood. What! will ſuch dare to refer their cauſe to the Judgment-day, and be willing to be determined to Life or Death, to Salvation or Damnation, as they can make this good? Will they put Eternity upon this iſſue, and inſiſt upon it, That they could not know what they were to believe or do, becauſe the Scriptures that ſhould have informed and directed them, were obſcure, uncertain, and unintelligible? If they will not offer this by way of relief or mitigation, then 'tis plain that all the cry of Obſcurities, and Difficulties, and Uncertainties, are but pitiful ſhifts, and ſorry pretences. There are plain places and Books enough and enough, to ſilence all ſuch preſumptuous and arrogant Cavillers.

If we will believe our own Eyes, and credit our own Underſtandings, the Scripture is plain in all that is neceſſary for us to know; and if we do according to what that teaches, and we may learn from it, we ſhall never

never be wanting in all neceſſary qualifications for that Everlaſting happineſs which is therein revealed, and for the promoting of which it was written. *Which God grant to us all through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Amen.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

PAge 5. *Line* 19. *r.* he ſhould. *p.* 9. *l.* 19. *del.* of Life. *p.* 13. *l.* 5. after them. *del.* (.).